

A
L E T T E R
T O
Mr. DAVID HUME,
O N T H E
T R A G E D Y
O F
D O U G L A S,
It's A N A L Y S I S.
A N D T H E
C H A R G E a g a i n s t M r. G A R R I C K.

By an ENGLISH CRITIC.

— — *Sic ais, ast ego contra.*
So thou sayest; but I am of a contrary Opinion.

L O N D O N,
Printed for J. SCOTT, in Pater-noster Row.

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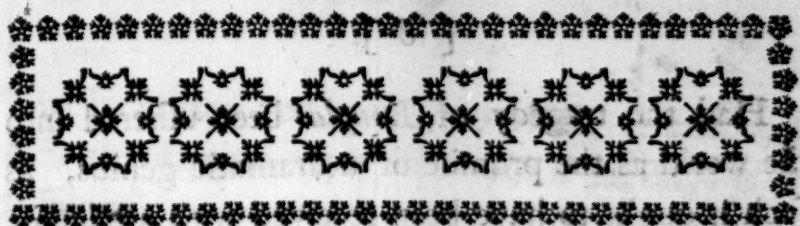
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1918

DOUGLAS
IT'S A MANLY SILENCE
AND THE
CHARGE AGAINST MR. GARRICK.
BY AN ENGLISH CRITIC.

LONDON
Printed by J. Scott, 11, Abchurch Lane.



A

LETTER

TO

Mr. DAVID HUME.

SIR,

HAVING for a long time conceived the highest esteem for the variety of your literary merit, a recommendation from you was almost a sanction to pre-engage my implicit approbation. How high were my expectations raised by your dedicatory commendation of *the tragedy of Douglas*; but, alas! how fallen, from seeing its representation: nor has a perusal since won me over as an admirer of it.

Had

Had the tragedy of *Douglas* been ushered into the world as the promise of a dramatic genius, as such it ought to have been received with applause; but its having been forced upon us authoritatively, in competition with all antiquity and the moderns, two obvious effects were produced in the minds of men; to wit, curiosity was excited in some, jealousy provoked in others. I am sorry to inform you, Sir, that in consequence, your *national* judgment has been greatly run upon here, and your critical stocks reduced almost to bankruptcy.

For my part, when I first read your panegyrical paragraph, I for some time hesitated as to the sincerity of it, and could not help reflecting on the passage in *The Art of Sinking in Poetry*, written by your truly ingenious countryman Dr. *Arbutnot*.

“ Take all the best qualities you can find in the
 “ most celebrated heroes; if they will not be re-
 “ duced to a consistency, lay them *all in a heap*
 “ upon him. But be sure they are qualities which
 “ your *patron* would be *thought to have*; and to
 “ prevent any mistake which the world may be
 “ subject to, select from the alphabet those capital
 “ letters that compose his name, and set them at
 “ the head of a dedication.”

But, on a second reading of it, I changed opinion, and have moreover been assured, that
 what

what is written you meant, to which, in amaze, I used the famous reply of "*Est il possible*," is it possible ?

The four great and revered names, *Maffei*, *Voltaire*, *Otway*, *Shakespeare*, which you have employed as supporters of *Douglas*, put me in mind of the statue of Lewis XIV. in *Paris*, where the four nations *Germany*, *Spain*, *Holland*, and *England*, are chained round him as vanquished, and lavishly accompanied with all the tokens of subjection. However this may please the national vanity of the *French*, all foreigners with reason laugh at the folly of the design, and unpardonable foppery of the execution.

I respect you too much, Sir, to make any unmannered or indelicate applicaton; such as "All fools admire, but men of sense approve;" and shall impeach you by an evidence whom I dare say will not be objected to, yourself---and from the standard of taste.

"Strong sense united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, whenever they are to be found, is *the true standard of taste and beauty*."

"Just

“ Just expressions of passion and nature are sure,
 “ after a little time, to gain public vogue, which
 “ they maintain for ever.”

According to this just and admirable doctrine, what is likely to be the fate of *the tragedy of Douglas*? Neglect and oblivion: however illumined for the present by the flambeau, you (forgive the expression,) too partially, or in the mildest terms, too sanguinely, hold before it.

Not satisfied to have precluded to the assured triumph of this tragedy in your dedication, an unprovoked and congenial enforcer of the extravagance of its merit, has been artfully diffused thro' the public under the title of *The Tragedy of Douglas Analysed*, a seeming attack, which the disappointed reader finds to be the second part of the same tune you had begun in your dedication, and which is there quoted, in order to be illustrated true in every article; therefore, to join issue the sooner, we shall follow the method therein observed.

From page seven to twelve is a tedious historical account of the fable, quite too long for the proposed limits of this letter, to be quoted, and therefore I refer to it.

The next heads proceeded to, are the characters, manners, and diction. Having nothing to object
 against

against what the analyser says relative to the two former, the following citations will sufficiently shew that our disapprobation arises not from caprice, but very justifiable motives.

Lady RANDOLPH.

For in your shades I deem some spirit dwells,
Who from the *chiding* stream, or *groaning* oak,
Still *bears*, and *answers* to MATILDA's moan.

Wherefore *chiding*, *groaning*, *bears*, *answers*?
This may be founded on some tradition, or popular error of *Scotland*; but to *English* understandings, if not altogether nonsensical, is at least chimerical.

Thou do'st not think so : *woeful* as I am. —
Woeful indeed !

But whither goest thou now ?
Is a question in the low familiar.

The misplaced and *Hors d'Oeuvre* compliment
to the union —

A river here, there an ideal line, &c.
is tedious and insipid ; the line it closes with flat,

The youthful warrior, is a *clod* of *clay*.

Clod and *clay* are not only mean words, but also cacophonous to the ear.

B

ANNA.

ANNA.

To dry

These piteous tears, I'd *throw* my life *away*.

For but a confident, there is a quality-ease in this offer to oblige a friend. But she soon relapses into a diction more apposite to her condition ;

I-will-speak-so-no-more,
and presents us at the same time with a nasty image.

But silent mix

My tears with hers.

Lady RANDOLPH.

Can thy feeble pity

Roll back the *flood* of never *ebbing* time.

Is this strictly correct, *ebb* and *flood* being opposites ? *Roll* is inadequate here.

And with him,

In spite of all my tears did MALCOLM go.

That tears should have been shed rather to detain her but three weeks married husband *Douglas*, than an unsubstitutive brother, will be assented to by all young married ladies who are so unfashionable as to love their husbands.

Fault'ring I took

An oath equivocal, that I ne'er would

Wed one of *Douglas'* name.

This

This is a pretty jesuitical device, she having been married to one already.

ANNA.

Never did I hear

A tale so sad as this.

Nor any body else.

Lady RANDOLPH.

The good priest

Who join'd our hands, my brother's antient tutor,
With his lov'd *Malcolm* in the battle fell,
They *two, alone*, were privy to the marriage.

The poet is hard run here, in order to distress his *heroine*. Why kill the priest in battle? Perhaps this action happened in the days of the *Church militant* !

Across the *Carron* lay

The *destin'd* road.

This name of a river in *Scotland*, from its likeness in sound to our *English* word *carrion*, is grating to the ears of a *London* audience. Why *destin'd* road ?

ANNA.

The hand that spins th' uneven thread of life,
May smoothe the length that's yet to come of yours.

This may appear a pretty figure to those acquainted with the art of spinning, tho' it does not

to me. The last line is monosyllabically harsh, a fault our author is often guilty of.---To *Anna* replies

Lady RANDOLPH.

Not in this world.
I should be glad to know in what other.

Never were vice and virtue pois'd so ill
As in GLENALVON's unrelenting mind.

On the contrary, I think never better, if he played his varied parts with that subtlety and *pro-
tean* art she ascribes to him.

Lord RANDOLPH.

Blush not, *flower of modesty*,

Is an odd expression from one man to another,
and would be better addressed to one of the gentle
sex.

Lady RANDOLPH.

I will be sworn thou wilt not.

This is inelegant, and not suited to the rank of
the speaker.

Lord RANDOLPH.

Go with me, NORVAL, and thine eyes shall see
The chosen warriors of thy native land,
Who languish for the fight, and beat the air
With brandish'd swords.

I dislike this picture of *Scotch* warriors *beating the air*; the renowned Don *Quixote* indeed encountered windmills.

GLENALVON.

And *waves* the *flag* of her displeasure o'er me.

This would not be improper from a sea-officer.

Persifive wisdom is the *fate* of man.

I do not understand this line; and confess my ignorance of what *persifive* means.

We found him lurking in the hollow *glynn*.

Glynn is a word used in *Scotland* and *Ireland*, but not in the meridional parts of *England*.

NORVAL.

Red came the river down, and loud and oft
The angry spirit of the water shriek'd.

The meaning of *red* here, and the *angry spirit of the water shrieking*, are unknown to us *South Britons*.

By the moon's light I saw, whirl'd round and round,
A basket: soon I drew it to the bank,
And nestled curious there an infant lay.

Quite

Quite the contrary, and all drenched in water, is most likely, unless the basket had been purposely caulked, from a fore-knowledge of the event.

Sir MALCOLM of our barons was the *flower*

Our author seems fond of the word *flower*, to mark male-eminence ; wherefore, pursuant to the baptismal vows you have made for him as his sponsor, (not at all alluding to the song) let him be called the *flower* of *Edinburgh's* tragic writers ; for, on this side of the *Tweed*, nothing more will, or ought to be allowed him.

The panegyric analyst, who has quoted many indifferent, has, in my sense, omitted several of the most beautiful passages, which, as they occur, I shall insert in this letter ; for instance.

Lady RANDOLPH.

What does my ANNA think
Of the young eaglet of a valiant nest ?
How soon he gaz'd on bright and burning arms,
Spurn'd the low dunghill where his fate had thrown
[him
And tower'd up to the region of his fire !

ANNA.

Mysterious nature, with the unseen cord
Of powerful instinct, drew you to your own.

A

A *cord* is a visible substance; besides, this is too gross and material an image of the power of instinct.

GLENALVON.

The field

Must man to man, and foot to foot, be fought.

This rather excites an idea of two armies wrestling, than fighting with offensive weapons.

Here follow other unpardonable omissions by the analyser.

LORD RANDOLPH.

An army knit like ours would pierce it thro':
Brothers, that shrink not from each other's side,
And fond companions, fill our warlike files:
For his dear offspring, and the wife he loves,
The husband, and the fearless father arm.
In vulgar breasts heroic ardour burns,
And the poor peasant mates his darling lord.

The Cross of Christ. *Christian Cross* would sound less harsh to the ear; what follows is a fine picture of decayed beauty, and some judicious sentiments.

LADY RANDOLPH.

Arise, my son! in me thou dost behold
The poor remains of beauty once admir'd:
The autumn of my days is come already;

For

For sorrow made my summer haste away.
Yet in my prime I equall'd not thy father ;
His eyes were like the eagle's, yet sometimes
Liker the dove's ; and, as he pleas'd, he won
All hearts with softness, or with spirit aw'd.

Thou dost not know what perils and injustice
Await the poor man's valour. O ! my son !
The noblest blood in all the land's abash'd,
Having no lacquey but pale poverty.

There burst the smother'd flame !

How do bad women find
Unchanging aspects to conceal their guilt ?
When I by reason, and by instinct urg'd
Full hardly can dissemble with these men
In nature's pious cause.

The following remark deserves the attention of all
men ambitious of the matrimonial state.

LORD RANDOLPH.

Let no man after me, a woman wed
Whose heart he knows he has not ; tho' she brings
A mine of gold, a kingdom for her dowry.

GLENALVON.

She too that seem'd
Pure as the winter stream when ice emboss'd
Whitens its course.

This is strained, quaint, and affected; and what
 follows sheer bombast.

He's in a proper mood
 To chide the thunder if it *at him roar'd*.

Glenalvon is answered with a sensible, and manly
 ingenuity by *Douglas*.

Sir, I have been accustomed all my days
 To hear and speak the plain and simple truth :
 And tho' I have been told that there are men
 Who borrow friendship's tongue to speak their scorn,
 Yet, in such language I am little skill'd.
 Therefore I thank *Glenalvon* for his counsel,
 Tho' it founded harshly.

GLENALVON.

What will become of you ?

is an unheroic interrogation.

Thy truth ! thou'rt all a lye.

This brutality does not meet with an instantaneous
 and proper retort from one of young *Douglas's* sup-
 posed feeling, which, by the following sentiments,
 is farther manifested.

C

DOUGLAS.

DOUGLAS.

To the liege lord of my dear native land
 I owe a subject's homage: but, ev'n him,
 And his high arbitration I'd reject,
 Within my bosom reigns another lord;
 Honour, sole judge and umpire of itself,
 If my free speech offend you, noble *Randolph*,
 Revoke your favour, and let *Norval* go
 Hence as he came, alone, but not dishonour'd.
 Imposes silence with a *stilly* sound.

What means *stilly* here? is it tantamount to *stiling*? I know the word is in *Shakespeare*, but do not understand it, in the place he uses it.

NORVAL.

And *ever* and *anon* they vow'd revenge,

Ever and *anon*, are no doubt, supposed defensible, because in a shepherd's mouth, and in imitation of *Homer's* practice, are in p. 60, faithfully repeated by *Douglas* to his mother.

DOUGLAS.

May heav'n inspire some fierce gigantic *Dane*
 To give a bold defiance to our host!

Before he speaks it out, I will accept!

-How accept it before he speaks it out? Does

Sad *fear* and *melancholy* still divide
The empire of my breast with *hope* and *joy*.

This, Sir, is an abridgement of your Dissertation
on the Passions.

Lady RANDOLPH.

Too well I see

Which way the current of thy temper *sets*;
Drives would perhaps be more explicit.

The sentiments of dying *Douglas* are not amiss;
nor is the mother's affliction ill drawn; nay, some-
what affecting. But why she should plunge from
a precipice head-foremost into the sea, I cannot see
any reason, nor for her, or her son's deaths. He
might have killed *Glenalvon*, tho' previously wound-
ed by him in the back, but, not mortally; and
lord *Randolph*, in expiation of his groundless jealousy
and rash attempt resign to victorious *Douglas* his
rightful inheritance.

The prologue, a learned allusion to the old song
of *Chevy-Chace*, is of the true *poetical profound*.

In *ancient times* when *Britain's trade* was arms,

Why not *pride* instead of *trade*; but the *Scotch*
have always sneered at the *English* as a trading nation.

And the lov'd music of her youth alarms.

The sense of this line, not intelligible to us, alludes rather to the musical alarms of *Highland* bag-pipes.

It would be too much to take in the whole *prologue* here ; to read it is enough ; where it emerges from confusion and obscurity, it gently subsides in kindred lines to this,

They knock'd alternate at each other's gate !

It concludes with an humble petition in behalf of *Scotland*.

The epilogue is a priggish affectation ; and I hope will never be relished by a genuine *British* audience. The far-fetched comparison of the *Nile* is stolen. I object to the epithet of *celestial* joined to *melancholy* in the last line. Heaven, by all information I have ever had of it, is the kingdom of joy, it is therefore a *dissenting* opinion to make it the abode of *melancholy*.

Why has the panegyrist taken notice but of three performers, and natives of *Ireland*? shameful partiality ! This appears a flagrant combination of the *Scotch* and *Irish* against the true sons of old *English* roast-beef, as if, forsooth, the former are only qualified to write tragedy, and the latter to perform. But, to thy teeth, partial Analyst, I will do my country-folks the justice they deserve.

He

He who figured in the character of *Glenalvon*, manifested a projectile spiritedness of person, and strictly adherent to *Horace's* rule, *Semper sibi constans*, without any variation throughout: now, this is what may be called, supporting a character.

The actor of lord *Randolph* was self-collected, having the curb of his passions in hand. He exhibited a commanding calmness of deportment, and a level, stomach-fetched, dignity of voice.

The liquid toned actress of *Anna* irradiated sorrow with her smiles; how sweetly did she speak?

Thy vassals grief great nature's order break
And change the noon-tide to the midnight hour.

I should not have been surprised if the superior beings descended from heaven to her pretty manner of uttering this invitation.

Ye ministers

Of gracious heav'n who love the human race,
Angels and seraphs who delight in goodness!
Forake your skies, and to her couch descend!
There from her fancy chase those dismal forms
That haunt her waking; her sad spirit charm
With images celestial, such as please
The blest'd above upon their *golden beds*.

I owed this to my country; so now my mind is at ease. *Golden beds* favours of *Epicurism*.

The

The ground-work of the play is an absolute absurdity, for either the lady *Randolph* must have been very artful, who had a chopping boy eighteen years before, to pass on her husband for a maid; or he, lord *Randolph* must have been very unacquainted with the affairs of women. I fear the latter case; and from ineffectual nights sprung the daily cause of her tears; and certainly a very material one. *Penelope*, it is true, mourned twenty years for *Ulysses*; but then she did not admit an *apathic* lover to tantalize her in bed.

The shepherd, the jewels, and recognition of this doleful piece, are worn-out devices of the stage, and expletive pegs of the human invention.

The protracted monotony of lady *Randolph's* grief is irksome. One character often exhibited in the same piece, must be agitated by variety of passions, otherwise we grow tired of the sameness.

After the discovery of *Douglas* he is not thrown into any interesting situation, nor is there any dramatic anxiety throughout, arising from the intricacy of the plot; for from the beginning to the end, it is an uninterrupted downhill greensword course, entirely against the revolutionary spirit of the scenic laws, which perhaps, (nay, by your miscalled Dissertation, or rather Differtatiuncle on tragedy, it appears)

pears) you are not acquainted with. We had, however, a right to expect at least, unexceptionable correctness of stile, in a work by you so immoderately praised, not to say, profanely.

I now take leave of *Douglas*, this *Aurora borealis* of tragedy, that had so long coruscated over us from the North, to execute the last part of my task, to wit, to defend Mr. *Garrick*, by disculpating him from a heavy charge, disseminated every where from the Drawing-room in *St. James's* to the Night-cellars; which is, that he had the impudence to refuse *The Tragedy of Douglas*, the best play ever acted, not only on the *English* stage, but on any other antient, or modern.

The author not only absolves, but apologises for Mr. *Garrick* by his motto.

Non ego sum vates, sed prisca conscius ævi.

“ I am not a poet; but well read in old ballads. ”

Mr. *Garrick* acquiesced to the former part of his confession; and told him that but poor materials for the stage could be derived from the latter. This is the upshot of his crime. Has he then deserved all the foul-mouthed abuse that has been lavished on him? I think not, who am not partial
im.

The

The pulpit and clergy of *Scotland* are irreverently treated in the *Analysis*, which ends with a bullying line, that might waggishly be retorted, to wit,

The blood of *Douglas* will defend itself.

That is, people will keep aloof from it, because,

Nemo impune laceffit.

No body rubs to it with impunity.

The drift of the whole being now seen through; with a dislike to your partiality, but, esteem and veneration for your *genius* and erudition,

I am, SIR,

Your, &c.

F I N I S.

